BIKER GUIDE



be biker be coach be .brussels 🍫





Foreword

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You have decided to try out a bike as a means of travel. Congratulations! Bike Experience is an excellent opportunity to cycle in the city. Together with your Coach, you will (re)discover Brussels on two wheels.

Bike Experience starts with a training session, headed by one of our bike trainers. After this short lesson, you will feel sufficiently self-confident to cycle in city traffic. The lesson takes place in three stages. Firstly, specific attention is given to the traffic regulations for cyclists. In a second stage your cycling ability will be tested. You will become acquainted with your bike (which you have possibly loaned). In a third stage, we will ride through the streets of Brussels!

Experience has shown that two weeks are enough to test the bike as a daily means of travel. You can agree on the times with your Coach. Together you will also choose the most suitable routes, that are pleasant, safe, and fast! After three days of coaching, you will be ready to cycle by yourself.

If you want to share your experience with others, please do so! You can post them on our social networks, and be one of our best ambassadors!

If you still have any questions after reading this guide, ask your Coach, or contact the Bike Experience team.



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Preparation



Which bike for which journey?

As a cyclist, you need to have good equipment first and foremost. A good bike, adapted to your size and itineraries! Not every bike is suitable for every journey.

To help you choose, we will shortly discuss three common bicycle types.

TIP

When purchasing a bike, always ask to test it before making any decision. You can find a list of Brussels-based bicycle shops at www.provelo.org.



City bike

This is the 'standard' bike. There are men's and women's models, with few or many gears. We think seven to eight gears is a good choice for people who often cycle in the city. This model is available with an integrated gear hub (which never slips and can be operated when the bike is stationary). If you often ride on hilly terrain, choose a classic derailleur with several cogwheels at the front and rear, which make it possible to have up to 27 gears. Choose a model with good brakes and tyres (there even exist anti-puncture tyres). A good first-hand city bike will cost somewhere between 500 and 600 euros.

Electric bike

The electric bicycle or E-bike has gained enormously in popularity in recent years. It is actually a bike with an electric assistance function which is activated, when required, by pedalling, which makes that it is not a motorbike. The power of E-bikes is limited to 0.25 kW, speeds to 25 km/h, in accordance with European guidelines.

A good electric bike costs at least € 1,200. You need to be aware of a few things, in particular about the battery. The type of battery not only determines the cost, but also the bike's lifespan and range. Some electric bikes also have a pedal-assist function, an adjustable assistance function, and/or a regeneration function (in which the battery charges when braking or riding downhill). The battery can usually be removed from the bike to be recharged. Don't hesitate to test various models before making a decision, and preferably ask a specialist retailer for advice.

Foldable bike

If you are planning to regularly combine a bike and public transport, purchasing a foldable bike is worth considering. It is the ideal solution for situations in which your home and/or place of work are situated some distance from a public transport station (between 1 and 5 kilometres), or for cyclists who can't stall a normal bike safely at night. However, a foldable bike is less comfortable on long journeys and cobblestones. They are also more expensive than regular city bikes (around € 1,000).

Important criteria are compactness, weight, number of gears, type of gear mechanism (derailleur or hub), wheel size (the bigger they are, the more stable the bike, but the less manoeuvrable and compact it is), ease of transport folded up, available accessories (lighting, bags, transport cover, etc.).

Second-hand bike

A second-hand bike can be a good alternative to a brand-new model. A quality bike for a low price is not only light on your wallet, but also good for the environment.

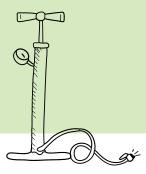
A few important points to ensure a second-hand bike doesn't end up being more expensive in maintenance than its purchase price:

- Frame quality and size (suitable for your shape).
- Transmission: chain, control cables, derailleur.
- Brakes: be sure to check the brake pads (the grooves must be visible) and brake cables.
- Pedals: do they give way if they are pulled outwards? Are they firmly attached?
- Wheels: give them a spin to see whether or not they are buckled. Are there any spokes missing?
- Tyres: ideally your only point of contact with the ground, check them thoroughly!
- Other components: saddle, handgrips, mudguards, lights, etc.
- Is the mandatory equipment present?

TIP

Always ask to test the bike on the road first, before buying. Take a ride around the block and put the bike through a thorough test: change gears, ride uphill, test the brakes.

Inform yourself about the price of components and calculate how much potential repairs could cost.



Preparation

The bike's size and your position

Another important point of attention when choosing a bike is its frame size and your body's position on the bike. There are few things worse than riding a bike too small or too big! Ask for advice!





Preparation

TIP

Some bikes have an adjustable handlebar stem to increase (or reduce) the distance between your arms and the handlebars. Make sure you can still operate the brakes after adjusting the handlebar stem.

Your riding position can be modified by adjusting the saddle and handlebars. Don't forget:

- The correct saddle height is important: to be able to exert as much force on the pedals as possible, your legs shouldn't be too stretched or bent.
- Adjust the saddle by standing next to it. The saddle should be at hip height.
- When sat on the saddle, you should be able to touch the ground with the tips of both feet.
- The saddle can be adjusted forwards or backwards.
- You can exert more force if there is good contact between your feet and the pedals.
- The handlebars should be at the same height as the saddle. Lower the saddle for a more aerodynamic position. Raise the saddle to sit more comfortably and have a better view of the traffic.

Most of all, make sure that you feel at ease. It might take a few adjustments to find the ideal riding position.

TIP

Place the front part of your feet on the pedals, not your heels. You will cycle much faster.

Equipment

Now that you have adjusted your bike to your body, it needs to be fully equipped... As do you!

Mandatory bike equipment

You can personalise your new acquisition, as long as you respect the legal obligations. The accessories described below are mandatory on all bikes (foldable bikes, electric bikes, and city bikes).





Preparation

TIP

Many bikes are fitted with a dynamo. If this slows you down too much, you can replace it with electric lights at the front and rear. These may be LED lights. They may be attached to both the bike and the cyclist. You can also consider a hub dynamo.

Personal equipment

The basic equipment of every cyclist:

- A sturdy lock: definitely the most important purchase, besides the bike!
- A reflective vest and helmet: these are not obligatory but recommended.
- Bicycle bags and/or basket: handy for transporting small bags or groceries.
- · A bike pump.
- Snap wraps: to keep trouser legs pinned down and increase visibility.

How can you avoid your bike getting stolen?

- Always secure both the frame and the front wheel of the bike to a solid object, even if it's just for a little while.
- Use a good lock (preferably U-shaped).
- Have your bike engraved.
- Make an identification sheet for the bike or request it from the seller, in case of a second-hand bike.
- You can also get insurance for expensive bikes.

TIE

Take your foldable bike with you everywhere.

Which clothing?

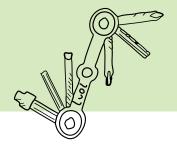
Despite what people often think, you by no means need the latest sportswear to cycle to work. Perhaps you have already noticed that many cyclists wear suits and ties, while many female cyclists are elegantly dressed... Anything is possible! The only thing that matters is that you are free to move and feel comfortable.

TIP

When purchasing clothing to wear while cycling, choose clothes which are comfortable and not too warm.

Do not cycle with loose laces, loose hair which could obstruct your view, accessories which could get stuck and cause accidents (scarves, hats, belts), flared trousers, or long skirts.





Preparation

Bike maintenance

Now that you have finally found the ideal bike, you need to take good care of it... Check it regularly to avoid major repairs.

TIP

For minor repairs, don't hesitate to drop by a cycle repairman or bicycle point.

REGULARLY CHECK:

- Brake setting.
- General condition of the tyres and tyre pressure (check what is written on the tyre).
- Clean and grease the chain.
- Check the lights.
- Clean the wheels (especially reflective wheels which replace mandatory wheel reflectors).
- Derailleur: have it checked immediately whenever you experience faulty gear changes.

Plan a full check-up every year.

MAINTENANCE SET:

A basic maintenance set includes

- · A bike pump.
- An Allen key or adjustable spanner.
- Emergency repair kit for inner tubes and to change a wheel.
- Some oil or grease.

Bike routes

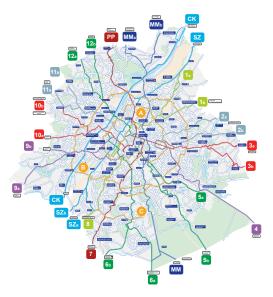
Brussels Cycle Map

Prepare your route with your Coach before setting off. The cycle map can help you work out the ideal route (taking in consideration hillsides, bike-friendly roads, greenery, etc.).



Regional and municipal cycle routes are signposted routes suitable for cyclists. These routes usually follow local roads with less traffic. Cycling on these is calmer than on major roads. Within the Brussels-Capital Region, 19 regional cycle routes will soon be completed.





Preparation



Alternative roads

Don't hesitate to try out alternative routes. For example:

- Consider the lift at the Palais de Justice.
- Make use of the cycle stairway at the Mont des Arts, near Bozar.
- Consider cycling through the Cinquantenaire Park, instead of driving round.
- Follow the Promenade Verte around Brussels.
- Don't forget that the Grand Place is prohibited for cyclists, as are, unfortunately, most of the parks in Brussels.
- Make use of the pedestrian zone in the city centre.

Public transport

METRO AND TRAM

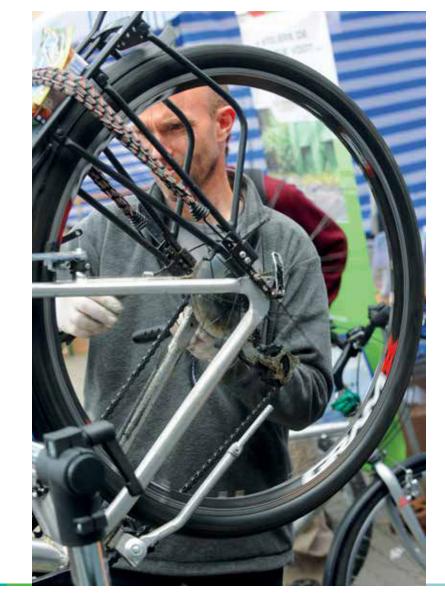
You can take your bike on the Brussels metro for free, but never during peak hours (weekdays from 7 until 9 am and from 4 until 6:30 pm). This last rule does not apply to foldable bike. Note that some stations have limited accessibility for bikes and a maximum of two bikes are permitted per metro carriage. Space for bikes is usually provided in the first or last metro carriage.

Bikes can also travel on trams under the same conditions (but only on recent, lowembedded models, and only when indicated).

TRAIN

You can take your bike on trains. For foldable bikes, no additional charges need to be paid, on condition that you keep your it next to you.

Per standard bike, a supplement of € 5 is charged per single journey. Note that not all stations allow you to get on a train with your bike, so enquire before boarding.





Cycling in traffic



To enjoy cycling in the city in safety and comfort, you need to respect a couple of basic rules.

Position

The position you occupy in traffic is a determining factor for your comfort and safety.

- Check your equipment: Choose comfortable clothes that are suited to the weather. Maintain your bike, check the tyre pressure, and the brakes.
- Respect the rules of the road: Every driver/rider has rights and obligations. If you want to be respected yourself, you need to respect others. Never cross red lights, unless specific traffic signs grant access to do so with the necessary caution. Leave footpaths for pedestrians and never ride on the wrong side of the road, unless permitted.
- Make sure you are easily visible: People need to be able to see you. Never ride in a vehicle's blind spot, occupy the right space on the road, use the cycle lanes at traffic lights, and switch your lights on (front and rear) as soon as the sun starts to set.
- Think ahead: Indicate timely and clearly where you are going (with an outstretched arm), and ride in straight lines as much as possible.
- Occupy the right space on the road: Ride approximately one metre from the side of the road or parked cars. Stay on a lookout for people mindlessly opening car doors!
- Make sure you don't get blocked in: Be careful when overtaking or manoeuvring to not get stuck in traffic.
 When approaching crossroads where you might need to stop, don't hesitate to drive in the middle of your lane.
 Always stay visible and think ahead!

- Having priority is not the same as driving safely. Assume, on principle, that cyclists are less visible than cars, and that motorists might be surprised by cyclists' presence.
- Communicate. Try to make eye contact with other drivers. Make sure they have seen you before riding onto crossroads!
- **Be courteous**. Respect the public space that you share with others! Be polite and thank car drivers and other road users who give you priority. Don't forget that pedestrians have priority on zebra crossings!
- Be on the lookout. Keep an eye on your surroundings, be alert for potential obstacles, and anticipate!

Traffic Laws: a refresher

Bike infrastructure



BIKE LANES

Cycle lanes are a part of the road intended for cyclists. Two solid white strips or a blue traffic sign make it obligatory to use them. However, bear in mind that cycle lanes are not exclusively intended for cyclists. Class A mopeds must also use them, as must pedestrians when indicated.

If the cycle lane is not useable, then traffic law specifies that cyclists can ride on the road.

Cyclists may therefore leave cycle lanes to turn off, overtake, or avoid obstacles.

If the cycle lane terminates and merges into the road, the cyclist has priority. Note that priority does not mean safety.



Cycling

in traffic





BIKE INDICATION LANE

This is a lane in a different colour to the road on which other road users are alerted to the fact that cyclists may be on the road. They are usually found on roads which are not wide enough for a proper cycle lane.

This lane indicates where cyclists can ride, but their use is not obligatory. These bike indication lanes are increasingly replaced with chevrons.



CHEVRONS

These white or green markings indicate where cyclists can ride in places where no cycle lanes are provided. Just like bike indication lanes, these markings alert motorists that cyclists may be on the road.



LIMITED ONE-WAY TRAFFIC

Cyclists may ride the wrong way down a street on condition that an 'except cyclists' signpost is present. In that case, cyclists need to stay as much to the right as possible when passing oncoming traffic, and be very cautious at crossroads. Motorists often do not expect vehicles to be riding in the opposite direction. As such, adapt your speed and watch out for pedestrians, who may also be taken by surprise. Don't hesitate to warn them in advance.

When riding out of a street with limited one-way traffic, try to make eye contact with drivers before riding out (even if you have priority). Courtesy and politeness are very important in one-way traffic.



BIKE AREA

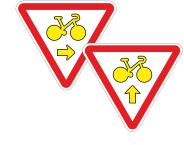
At some crossroads with traffic lights, bike areas are demarcated.

Make use of these to be more visible and be the first to

ride away when the lights turn green. See also 'Passing a traffic jam' in 'Important manoeuvres'.



Some traffic signs give permission to ignore traffic lights. The signs B22 and B23 allow cyclists to turn right or continue driving ahead if the lights are on red or orange. Note that this does not give you priority over other road users. Both signs are used in situations where the cyclist does not get in the way of the flow of traffic.



CYCLE STREETS

Important cycle lanes that still need to support motorised traffic can become cycle streets.

Motorised traffic is permitted on these roads under certain conditions. Cyclists cannot be overtaken and the maximum speed is 30 km/h.



Some bus lanes are also accessible for cyclists, on condition that a cycle image is applied to the road surface or on a signpost. In these areas, it is prohibited to ride two abreast, and cyclists need to stay as far to the right as possible. In these lanes, traffic lights apply to both buses and cyclists.

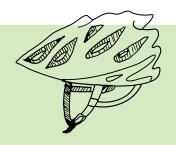


These zones are only accessible for cyclists if a bike is indicated on the signpost. If there is no more additional information present, cyclists may use these zones on condition that they ride at a walking pace. If there are many pedestrians, cyclists need to dismount.









Cycling in traffic

Important manoeuvres

PRIORITY FROM THE RIGHT

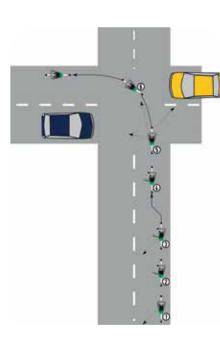
At crossroads where the traffic is not managed by an authorised person, traffic lights, or traffic signals, the priority from the right rule applies. Never forget that vehicles that stop still have priority.

Even if you have priority, always assume that you are not necessarily safe.

TURNING RIGHT

When turning right, clearly show your intention and don't take your corners too wide (keep a distance of one metre to be safe). Watch out for any pedestrians on zebra crossings.

TURNING LEFT



Never forget that whoever wants to change direction loses his or her priority:

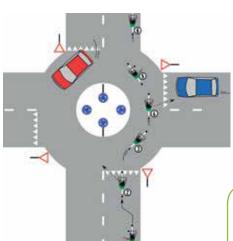
- 1. When approaching a crossroads, look behind you to assess the situation.
- 2. Indicate that you want to turn left by sticking out your left arm.
- With your arm outstretched, look behind you again to make sure the road is free, and/or that possible persons behind you have slowed down to allow you to carry out your manoeuvre.
- 4. Ride to the middle of the lane.
- 5. Place both hands on the handlebars and take a good look ahead and to the right when riding onto the crossroads. all vehicles coming from those directions have priority. never forget to also briefly look left (priority does not necessarily mean safety).
- 6. Take a wide turn to the left.
- 7. Return to riding about 1 metre from the edge of the road.

ROUNDABOUTS

Although roundabouts do not often cause accidents, a good position as a cyclist is nonetheless important to avoid being cut off by vehicles.

A few rules of thumb:

- 1. Before riding onto the roundabout, look behind you and move to the middle of the lane, to avoid being trapped by a vehicle coming from behind.
- 2. When approaching a roundabout, slow down and look left. Give priority to vehicles which are already on the roundabout.
- 3. Cycle in the middle of the lane on the roundabout so that you remain visible.
- **4.** Always try to make eye contact with motorists approaching the roundabout, even if you have priority.
- Before leaving the roundabout, clearly indicate your intention by sticking out your right arm.
- 6. Go back to riding about 1 metre from the edge of the road.



Remarks:

- If the driver behind you is impatient, stick out your left arm to indicate that you intend to keep riding on the roundabout.
- If there is a cycle lane on the roundabout, this must obligatorily be used. This infrastructure is gradually being phased out.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cyclists walking with their bikes by hand are considered pedestrians, and have to use the sidewalk. Cycling on the sidewalk is always forbidden, except for children under the age of nine (using bikes with a wheel diameter smaller than 50 cm).

Cycling

in traffic



PASSING A TRAFFIC JAM

If the vehicles are stationary, you can pass the traffic jam via the right or the left. If the vehicles are moving or are about to move, you may only pass the traffic jam via the left.

This is 'overtaking'.

Passing on the left is often safer because cyclists are more visible to drivers. If it is not possible to pass via the left or the right, remain in the traffic jam. It is important that you do not get closed in, or end up in a vehicle's blind spot!

BIKE AREA

This facility allows you to draw up to a crossroads with traffic lights in front of all other road users, and in the spot which is most suitable for the direction you wish to take (left, straight on, or right).



BLIND SPOT

A vehicle's blind spot is the area which falls outside the field of vision of a driver. It varies from vehicle to vehicle. As a cyclist, you need to be cautious when overtaking, or if a vehicle passes you or turns off (see illustration).

A few tips to be less vulnerable:

- Occupy the right amount of space on the road, be visible.
- Always remain behind a truck to avoid ending up in its blind spot.
- · Respect the safety distances.
- Only overtake when you are sure that there is sufficient time and space to do so, and especially when you are sure the driver has seen you. Keep in mind that you might need to swerve out of the way.
- If you are overtaken by a truck that wants to turn right, slow down and keep a safe distance behind it. Stop if necessary!

TRAM TRACKS

A tram has priority over all other road users, including cyclists. Always ride as perpendicular as possible on the tram or train tracks to avoid your wheels getting stuck in the tracks. If you are following tram tracks, it is sometimes best to ride on the inside of them, if there is not enough space to the right (to keep your one metre distance from parked cars).

LEAVING THE CYCLE LANE

If you cycle on the cycle lane, you have priority (except over trams). Cyclists may therefore leave cycle lanes to turn off, overtake, avoid an obstacle, or when the cycle lane is impossible to ride on.







Cycling in traffic



Legislation regarding the cycling allowance



When a cycle lane terminates and you need to continue forward on the road you have priority over cars, as this is not considered a manoeuvre. However, always remain cautious!

If you are leaving the cycle lane to turn off, you do not have priority.

At a crossing point for cyclists, you also do not have priority, unlike pedestrians on a zebra crossing.

NARROW ROADS

On narrow roads and in one-way streets, it is best to occupy the right amount of space on the road if overtaking vehicles could put you in danger. Always remain courteous and don't take any risks.

Cycling two abreast

You can always ride two abreast in a cycle lane, unless another bike wants to overtake or a two-way cycle lane is too narrow to pass each other.

Riding two abreast is also possible on the road, on condition that other road users are able to pass. Outside the city, cyclists always need to ride in single file whenever a vehicle approaches from behind.



People who use their bike for home-to-work travel can ask their employer for a cyclig allowance of € 0.23/km. Your employer, however, is not obliged to enter in this scheme set up by the Belgian federal government. This allowance does not depend on your Joint Committee or professional sector either.

A bike allowance can be accumulated with an STIB/ TEC/De Lijn/SNCB subscription. You are entitled to this, even if you only come to work on the bike a few days a week. It is calculated on the basis of the number of kilometres cycled with the bike. The employee does not pay any tax on this bonus, which is paid on the basis of a sworn declaration (the bonus does not count for holiday and illness days).



Bike associations



Testimonials



PRO VELO provides services, assists public authorities, schools, and businesses in promoting cycling. This non-profit organisation develops tailored solutions for a smooth and sustainable modal shift, and in doing so contributes to a better quality of life.

www.provelo.org - Tel.: +32 (0)2 502 73 55

THE FIETSERSBOND (CYCLISTS' ASSOCIATION) defends the interests of cyclists. By convincing communities and governments that riding a bike is a smart choice, the Fietsersbond wants to make cycling safer for all.

www.fietsersbond.be - Tel.: +32 (0)2 502 68 51

GRACQ - LES CYCLISTES QUOTIDIENS (Daily Cyclists) helps to ensure that anyone wanting to travel by bike can do so in the optimum conditions. With support from many volunteers, GRACQ represents the interests of cyclists before the Brussels and Walloon governments. GRACQ also informs, trains, and organises numerous initiatives that help raise bike awareness.

www.gracq.org - Tel.: +32 (0)2 502 61 30

LES ATELIERS DE LA RUE VOOT (Rue Voot Workshops) opened their first bicycle workshop in 1973, as a centre for expression and creativity. Under the guidance of experienced mechanics, workshop participants learn the necessary techniques for independently confronting the various forms of misfortune that can affect cyclists on a day-to-day basis.

www.voot.be - Tel.: +32 (0)2 762 48 93

CYCLO is a social enterprise that promotes cycling in Brussels via bike mechanics, recycling, and innovation.

www.cyclo.org - Tel.: +32 (0)2 512 68 90

"This afternoon I took advantage of my freedom as a cyclist by adapting my route on the way home to do some quick shopping. I also drove along a part of the Promenade Verte, near where my parents live. I even popped in to say hello before getting back on the Promenade Verte to continue my journey home. This would have never worked on public transport!"

"Yesterday we tasted the sweet taste of revenge, when overtaking a traffic jam on our way to the office. And to think I was stuck in the very same traffic jam last week..."

"After barely a week I've been well and truly bitten by the 'cycling bug'. I got it from my Coach. I'm not at all concerned, however, because according to the Fietsersbond, cycling has a positive effect on health..."

"My Coach is a real professional: he points to what I need to look out for, problems which might occur, ... But above all, he's also very friendly every morning!"

"Mission accomplished: what looked difficult at first, turned out to be child's play."

"I now ride to work whistling! I start the day full of energy after moving my body for half an hour, and in the evening I ride home along the canal - it's wonderful, all the more so on sunny days!"

"I handle stress better at the office. And above all, my jogging watch indicates that the daily ride helps me burn a few thousand calories. Which is very motivating!"

CONCLUSION

You now know all you need to hit the road. We wish you lots of cycling pleasure and a great Bike Experience!

If there are still any things unclear, or if you still have any questions, don't hesitate to contact your Coach or the Bike Experience team... We're here to help!

Are you convinced? Would you like to share your experience? Would you like to promote cycling as well?

A few tips:

- · Cycle as much as possible!
- Talk about it: word of mouth works!
- Become a member of the Fietsersbond/GRACQ.
- · Become a Coach yourself next year!
- Encourage your company to work on a bike policy. Pro Velo can help you with this.
- Stimulate colleagues by offering in-house bicycle training sessions.
- Contact the mobility coordinator of your company or offer to take on this role yourself!

We wish you lots of two-wheeled fun!

More info at Bike Experience

www.bikeexperience.brussels

Questions? Need advice?

Contact us

info@bikeexperience.brussels

02 318 84 07

More info on mobility in Brussels

www.mobilite.brussels

mobilite@sprb.brussels 0800 94 001

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